'Contemporary liberal thought imagines war as a perpetual policing exercise, in which disorder is made into order. Demonstrating a command of theory few analysts of war can muster, Holmqvist shows how liberalism supplies a set of metaphors – an intellectual scaffolding encompassing time, space, agency and power – through which war becomes a management tool for the restoration of the social contract in other peoples' countries. While real in its effects, such imagination amounts to an illusory construct of war, with results for all to see in Iraq and Afghanistan. Surpassing earlier analyses of liberal war in depth and sophistication, Holmqvist is now the definitive guide.'

— **Tarak Barkawi**, *London School of Economics and Political Science, UK*

'War without antagonism is one of the great oxymorons for our time. Holmqvist explores the sense in western military theory that war can be fought without ultimate opposition when it is about reducing disorder and policing good governance. Those who resist this oxymoronic post-adversarial logic get branded and punished as obstructionist criminal elements. Holmqvist stretches the concept of contemporary war as a form of policing liberal order by tracing its roots to pre-9/11 times and spaces and by theorising its depths today. She is a compelling and important new voice on the forms, logics and implications of today's western ways of warring.'

— **Christine Sylvester**, *University of Connecticut, USA*

This interdisciplinary study provides an original account of the US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to show how, why and with what consequences, twenty-first century wars became seen as policing wars. Holmqvist starts from the assumption that wars always reflect the societies that wage them and combines the analysis of Western strategic thinking with a philosophical examination of the core ideas that structure the contemporary liberal imagination. She argues that the US-led interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq were characterised by a widespread understanding of war as 'policing' – that is, waged against opponents deemed 'criminal' rather than political, and directed at the creation and maintenance of a certain type of 'order'. Holmqvist turns to themes of social theory and philosophy to offer new perspectives on why the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were waged in the way they were, and why the fantasy of policing wars came to resonate so widely amongst policy makers and academics alike. This unique contribution to the study of war and international politics will appeal to scholars of the philosophy and sociology of war, military strategy and international relations.

Caroline Holmqvist is Senior Lecturer in War Studies at the Swedish National Defence College in Stockholm, Sweden and a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for International Studies at the London School of Economics, UK. She has previously worked at the Stockholm Institute for International Affairs and at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

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Policing Wars

On Military Intervention in the Twenty-First Century

Caroline Holmqvist

Swedish National Defence College, Stockholm, Sweden

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macmillan

ISBN 978-1-349-99990-3
DOI 10.1057/9781137323613

ISBN 978-1-137-32361-3 (eBook)

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Reprint of the original edition 2014

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First published 2014 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

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Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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ISBN 978-1-137-32360-6

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

Typeset by MPS Limited, Chennai, India.

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This is not a book about policing. Nor is it, really, a book about war. Instead, it is an attempt to describe how a certain rationalisation of war – of war *as* policing, directed against purportedly ‘criminal’ forces and in the interest of upholding a particular type of ‘order’ – came to resonate so widely in the first decade of the twenty-first century. More than anything, it is an attempt to approach the study of war by looking at what sustains particular ideas, rationalisations and imaginations of war, and asking why certain ideas (about war) catch on when they do.

The US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq came to stand at the pivot of debates about war from the time of the original invasions in 2001 and 2003 respectively. For sure, they were a part of the ‘war on terror’, but they also had many other origins – and they fit in with particular ideas about the world, politics and change. This book turns to themes of social theory and philosophy to offer new perspectives on why these wars were conducted in the way they were, and why so many people at the time seemed to partake in the fantasy of war as ‘policing’.

This book is originally my PhD thesis, and the greatest thanks I owe are to Professor Christopher Coker and Professor Mervyn Frost, my two supervisors. Both were extremely generous, helpful and above all inspiring. Encouragement from my friends Dan Öberg, Tom Lundborg, Astrid Nordin and Stefan Borg of the Stockholm International Theory Group was important during the time I took to rewrite the thesis into a book.

Parts of Chapter 2 were published previously in *The Character of War in the 21st Century*, Eds Caroline Holmqvist and Christopher Coker (London: Routledge, 2010), and parts of Chapter 3 appeared in an article in the journal *Global Crime*, vol. 13 no. 4 (2012). I am grateful to Taylor & Francis for allowing me permission to reprint this material.

My sincere thanks go to Roger Mac Ginty, editor of *Rethinking Political Violence*, for inviting me to contribute this book to the series; to Julia Willan, Eleanor Davey-Corrigan and Harriet Barker at

Palgrave for their help along the way with all aspects of the project; and to Geetha Williams for excellent project management. My friend Jens Münch shot the cover image in Iraq in 2003; I'm very glad he allowed me to use it for this book. The photograph was taken on 17 February 2003 on the northbound motorway from Kuwait City, leading up to border with Iraq.

Finally, I'd like to thank my husband, Staffan, who has witnessed this project from PhD to book – via a stint in Kabul, Afghanistan in 2009 and two periods of leave from work with the arrival of our children Clara and Sofus in 2010 and 2013. I'm grateful for a great many things in our life together but right now most of all for his urging me to 'get the book done'.